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NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20
E-11 PSR-01 AGR-20 PC-04 TRSE-00 SNM-01 BNDD-05 /135 W
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R 010600Z FEB 72
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7699
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 0616

SUBJECT: NEW YEAR ASSESSMENT OF AFGHAN GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE
AND OUTLOOK FOR US POSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

I. SUMMARY: PERFORMANCE OF AFGHAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED OVERALL UNDER PRIME MINISTER ZAHIR IN RESPONSE TO CHALLENGE OF SEVERE DROUGHT AND ECONOMIC CRISIS, ALTHOUGH IMPROVEMENT HIGHLY UNEVEN AND CONCENTRATED AMONG A FEW CABINET MEMBERS. RAPID AND FLEXIBLE US ASSISTANCE HAS GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND STRENGTHENED US POSITION IN COUNTRY. UNDER MORE DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP, AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY STEERED CAREFUL AND SUCCESSFULLY NEUTRAL COURSE DURING INDO-PAK WAR, EVEN SHOWING SOME LIMITED CAPACITY TO RESIST SOVIET PRESSURES. RGA NOW MOVING WITH SOME DETERMINATION TO ESTABLISH BETTER RELATIONS WITH BOTH IRAN AND PAKISTAN AND TO STRENGTHEN TIES TO OTHER MIDDLE EAST MUSLIM COUNTRIES. SIMILAR ATTITUDES TOWARD OUTCOME OF INDO-PAKI WAR NOW TENDING TO REINFORCE PARALLELISM OF US AND AFGHAN POLICY GOALS IN REGION, FURTHER STRENGTHENING US POSITION HERE. AS A RESULT, I BELIEVE US SHOULD BE PREPARED PROVIDE SOME NEW ASSISTANCE THIS FISCAL YEAR, WITHOUT, HOWEVER, FURTHER RAISING US PROFILE IN COUNTRY.

II. 1971 PRODUCED SOME SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN RGA POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE.

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A. WHAT HAS CHANGED - INTERNAL.

1) PM ZAHIR'S PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT SHOW GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER BOTH ETEMADI AND MAIWANDWAL. IT IS POSSIBLE (THOUGH NOT HIGHLY PROBABLE) THAT ZAHIR'S GREATER TACTICAL SKILL AND UNDERSTANDING OF PARLIAMENTARY IMPERATIVES CAN EVEN BE TRANSLATED INTO A FEW CONCRETE LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS DURING LONGER MARCH TO AUGUST PARLIAMENTARY SESSION.

2) DEPUTY PM HAMED AND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WAKILI HAVE PROVEN UNCOMMONLY (FOR AFGHANISTAN) ENERGETIC AND COURAGEOUS MINISTERS. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY MEMORY THERE IS AN ATTEMPT AT SOME OVERALL DIRECTION OF THE ECONOMY (HAMED) AND A VERY ENERGETIC LEADERSHIP REGARDING WHEAT, ESPECIALLY FOOD FOR WORK, AND FERTILIZER DISTRIBUTION, HOWEVER CHAOTIC STILL. MINISTER OF INTERIOR MANSURI SEEMINGLY ENERGETIC AND COOPERATIVE. ALSO MINISTER OF COMMERCE GHAUSSI KNOWLEDGABLE AND WORKMANLIKE BUT NOT UP TO HIGH STANDARDS SET BY NUR ALI. MINISTER OF HEALTH SERAJ ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE, ESPECIALLY IN PROMOTING HEALTH CENTERS IN OUTLYING AREAS.

B. WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED - INTERNAL.

1) REST OF CABINET NOT NOTICEABLY IMPROVED, NOR ARE LOWER ECHELONS. MINISTER OF FINANCE CLEARLY OUT OF DEPUTY ILLUSTRATING PETER PRINCIPLE. SARABI OF PLANNING, ALWAYS SAD, GETTING Sadder. ENAYAT-SERAJ IN EDUCATION HAS PROVED DISAPPOINTING.

2) HAMED AND WAKIL, DESPITE ENERGY AND GOOD INTENTIONS, HANDICAPPED. HAMED LONG OPERATING AS A LONER THUS FAR HAS NOT STAFFED HIMSELF. WAKIL, HANDICAPPED BY OPERATING AS MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WITHOUT BUREAUCRATIC SUPPORT FROM ESTABLISHED MINISTRY, LESS EFFECTIVE BECAUSE OF UNCLEAR LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CERTAIN AMOUNT OF (HOPEFULLY DIMINISHING) POLITICAL NAIVETE. LOWER ECHELONS STILL UNABLE OR UNWILLING EXERCISE LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY. FEW PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FIRED, AND "BUSINESS AS USUAL" STILL PERVADES BUREAUCRACY.

3) WHILE PM ZAHIR'S PERSONAL HANDLING OF PARLIAMENT SUPERIOR, HE HAS STILL NOT BEEN ABLE TO MOVE NECESSARY BUT TOUGH MEASURES, ESPECIALLY THOSE NEEDED TO INCREASE REVENUES. I AM UNFORTUNATE.

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NATELY NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS WILL CHANGE SOON. I AM CONVINCED THAT PM FULLY UNDERSTANDS SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BUT HAS COME TO CONCLUSION MOVE SIMPLY NOT POSSIBLE POLITICALLY. REGRETFULLY I AGREE WITH HIS ASSESSMENT. PARLIAMENT REMAINS FRAGMENTED, UNDISCIPLINED, AND READILY MADE HOSTAGE BY DEMOGAGIC MEMBERS. NEXT SESSION LIKELY TO PRODUCE VERY DIFFICULT CHALLENGES TO GOVERNMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY (PUSHTUNISTAN, IRAN), ON UNIVERSITY CRISIS, AND OTHER THEMES SUCH AS FOOD DISTRIBUTION, CORRUPTION, AND STILL SLUGGISH ECONOMY.

C. WHAT HAS CHANGED - EXTERNAL.

1) ARRIVAL OF NEW, ENERGETIC, AMBITIOUS AND EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT FOREIGN MINISTER SHAFIQ HAS GALVANIZED (AFGHAN STYLE) FOREIGN MINISTRY. MORE CHANGES IN PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION ARE LIKELY TO OCCUR. MOREOVER QUICK-THINKING AND QUICK-ACTING FONMIN IS QUITE WILLING TO INTERVENE IN OTHER (ECONOMIC) MATTERS TO GET RAPID RESULTS.

2) OBVIOUSLY WITH KING'S APPROVAL NEW FONMIN SEEKS MORE ACTIVE ROLE FOR RGA IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAN OVER-CAUTIOUS AND NEGATIVE ETEMADI. THIS HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY RECENT CHANGES IN SUBCONTINENT AND SHIFTS IN POWER BALANCE OF AREA.

3) FOR FIRST TIME RGA WAS APPARENTLY WILLING RESIST USSR PRESSURE TO SOME EXTENT AND TAKE SEPARATE, INDEPENDENT LINE RE INDO-PAK CRISIS (KABUL 7621).

4) SHAFIQ NOW TAKING LONG-DELAYED INITIATIVES TO SETTLE HELMAND DISPUTE WITH IRAN AND SMOOTH RELATIONS MORE GENERALLY WITH GOI.

D. WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED - EXTERNAL.

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1) FOREIGN MINISTRY, ALTHOUGH CLEARLY ONE OF THE BEST RGA MINISTRIES, STILL SLOW AND SLUGGISH. ONLY SHAFIQ, FARHADI, KARZAI, MOHSENI, GHAUS HARD-WORKING AND KNOWLEDGABLE. REST REMAINS AS USUAL--WHICH IS NOT MUCH. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL SAADALLAH GHAUSI HIGHLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND OCCASIONALLY HELPFUL OUTSIDE AREA OF PROTOCOL RESPONSIBILITIES.

2) WHILE STIRRINGS OF AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE RE USSR POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, WE SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSION AS TO THE DEGREE OF THIS INDEPENDENCE, SHOULD SOVIETS DECIDE TO PUSH REALLY HARD ON ANY ISSUE.

III. US PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS: COMPLETE LIST WELL KNOWN TO DEPARTMENT. I WANT TO POINT PRIMARILY TO EFFECTIVE IMPACT OF USG FORTHCOMINGNESS ON PL 480 TITLE I AND II WHEAT, AND US ROLE IN STIMULATING NEW RGA FERVOR FOR FERTILIZER IMPORT AND DISTRIBUTION. WHILE BOTH PROGRAMS HAVE THEIR UNORTHODOX AND CHAOTIC FEATURES, PRIMARY AND IN MY VIEW DISTINCTIVE FEATURES ARE THAT (A) TENS OF THOUSANDS OF HUNGRY HAVE BEEN FED, (B) MANY NEW LOCAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN IN FOOD-FOR-1 WORK PROGRAM WITH RESULT GROWING RURAL AWARENESS SELF-HELP POSSIBILITIES, (C) DEMOCRATIC AND FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENED. HIGHLY EFFECTIVE, AND FLEXIBLE COLLABORATION BETWEEN PEACE CORPS AND USAID GREATLY ENHANCED

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IMPACT OF US POLICIES, AND EXEMPLIFIES INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION AT ITS BEST. USG HAS RECEIVED MUCH CREDIT, AND US POSITION IN AFGHANISTAN CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENED.

IV. AFGHANISTAN, THE REGION AND THE US.

1. RGA IS APPREHENSIVE OVER GROWING INDIAN POWER AND POSSIBLE FURTHER DISINTEGRATION PAKISTAN. DESPITE CONSIDERABLE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PRESSURE RGA HAS NOT EXPLOITED PAK DIFFICULTIES TO FEATHER OWN NEST. RGA WISHES ENCOURAGE MODERATE AND REALISTIC REGIME IN PAKISTAN IN ORDER AVOID ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CLOSER PAK ALLIANCE WITH PRC AND CONSEQUENT SINO-SOVIET "COLD WAR" INTENSIFYING AT AFGHAN BORDER, WITH STRONG POSSIBILITIES INCREASED AND POSSIBLY IRRISISTABLE SOVIET PRESSURE ON AFGHANISTAN TO CONFRONT PAKISTAN.

B. ABOVE CONSENSUS, PLUS DESIRE FOR A MORE DYNAMIC AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY, HAS MOVED RGA TOWARD ACTIVE PURSUIT CLOSER COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBORING MUSLIM COUNTRIES HOPING THEREBY BRING MEASURE OF SUPPORT TO BHUTTO. THIS COULD ALSO HELP IN OVERCOMING REMAINING PROBLEMS WITH IRAN, ALTHOUGH POWERFUL DOMESTIC (CONSERVATIVE) FORCES (AIDED BY MAIWANDWAL) AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION CONSTANTLY AGITATE AGAINST IMPROVEMENT RELATIONS WITH BOTH PAKISTAN AND IRAN. KING AND PM THEREFORE FIND IT POLITICALLY DIFFICULT MOVE IN BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE AND HAD BEEN GIVING PAKISTAN PRIORITY BECAUSE OF CRISIS. RECENT DRAMATIC VISIT TO TEHRAN BY FOMIN SHAFIQ SIGNALS GREATER CONCENTRATION ON IRAN RELATIONS TO DISARM PARLIAMENTARY CRITICS WHEN PARLIAMENT RECONVENES IN MARCH.

C. WHATEVER REACTION TO OUR POLICY RE INDO-PAK CONFLICT MAY HAVE BEEN ELSEWHERE, IN AFGHANISTAN IT HAS SERVED TO STRENGTHEN US POSITION BECAUSE OF PARELLEL AFGHAN CONCERNS RE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE, INDIAN INTENTIONS AND PAK FUTURE. BECAUSE WE WERE ALREADY DOING WELL HERE AS RESULT PROMPT USG ACTION IN RESPONSE DROUGHT EMERGENCY, I CONSIDER THE PRESENT PERIOD HIGH POINT IN USG STANDING IN AFGHANISTAN.

D. BECAUSE OF THE CONSIDERABLE COMMON GROUND IN USG AND RGA POLICIES I BELIEVE IT IS IN USG INTEREST TO SUPPORT PRESENT RGA, STRENGTHENING IT WHERE POSSIBLE BUT WITHOUT RAISING OUR

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PROFILE DRAMATICALLY. CORNERSTONE PROGRAM DIRECTIONS TO REFLECT THIS POLICY SHOULD INCLUDE:

- 1) THE FOOD-FOR-WORK PROGRAM;
- 2) THE ACCELERATED FERTILIZER PROGRAM, UNDER PRIVATE SECTOR DISTRIBUTION;
- 3) A CONTINUED US PRESENCE IN KABUL UNIVERSITY DESPITE CURRENT CRISIS ON CAMPUS (KABUL A-5);
- 4) STRONG CONTINUED PEACE CORPS PRESENCE AT ABOUT CURRENT VOLUNTEER LEVELS, WHICH BOTH VERY EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RECEIVED;
- 5) SUPPORT FOR IBRD ROLE IN PROVIDING FUTURE ECONOMIC PLANNING ASSISTANCE AND IN ADDRESSING ON MULTILATERAL BASIS LONG-TERM EXTERNAL DEBT BURDEN--AS MOVES IN DIRECTION EVENTUAL IBRD-LED "CONSULTATIVE GROUP" OF FOREIGN DONORS;
- 6) CONTINUED PRESSURE FOR INCREASED RGA COOPERATION IN EFFORT COMBAT NARCOTICS TRAFFIC AND PRODUCTION;
- 7) CLOSE, FREQUENT CONSULTATIONS AT HIGHEST LEVELS RGA CONCERNING US POLICIES TOWARD REGION;
- 8) EARLIEST POSSIBLE INVITATION TO KING FOR US VISIT TO UNDERSCORE USG SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE.

V. IN CONCLUSION, I ASSESS PAST YEAR AS ONE IN WHICH AFGHAN POLITICAL SYSTEM REMAINED COMPLETELY INTACT DESPITE SERIOUS CHALLENGES BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL. SYSTEM SHOWED SOME CAPACITY ADAPT TO CHALLENGE, THOUGH RESPONSE CLEARLY SLOW AND INADEQUATE MANY FRONTS. NO REAL TREATS TO REGIME OR THRONE ON HORIZON. US POSITION HERE SOMEWHAT ENHANCED, AND SELECTIVE SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS IN RGA PROGRAM CAN HELP SOLIDIFY OUR GAINS DURING 1972. GP-3.
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